

Safety ...Off The Job

Garden Chemicals – A Growing Concern

Pesticide application is a very serious business. Unless you have a commercial application license, you should use only products identified as domestic. Chemicals labelled commercial or registered have a far greater hazard potential and should only be used by trained personnel.

When the chemicals you buy need to be mixed or diluted before use, following the directions on the label is very important. This is the time when risk is at its highest because you are working directly with the undiluted product. Be near a water tap so spills and hands can be washed quickly. The mixing area should be clean, well ventilated and away from children, pets, food storage and laundry areas.

Allowing even a tiny amount of these chemicals to be taken into the body by breathing, swallowing or absorption through the skin is very hazardous. The following protective measures should be strictly followed:

- Wear clean rubber gloves and protective clothing when handling chemicals, and a respirator whenever recommended.
- Eye protection should be worn particularly when using products that carry the words warning or danger. Goggles offer superior protection to glasses because they completely enclose the eye. Contact lenses should not be worn, especially the soft or gas permeable type. Vapors can be absorbed by the contacts and

concentrated near the cornea even when goggles are worn.

- Do not store pesticides or empty pesticide containers anywhere near food or drink.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in a work area. Ensure the measuring cup used in your greenhouse will not be the same one used to make Grandma's favorite cookies.
- Never rub your eyes or touch your mouth while working with chemicals.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after eating, drinking, smoking or using the toilet.

A common problem of chemical application is drift. Pesticide droplets may be picked up and carried by the wind, rendering them both unsafe and ineffective. To best eliminate drifting, keep the droplet size as large as possible, and apply chemicals on a day with little or no wind.

Dispose of and store all chemicals according to the specific recommendations on the label. Keep all chemicals in their original containers with readable labels. A locked cabinet in a cool, dry, well ventilated area is the safest place for storage.

In the event that a pesticide or other chemical is swallowed, call a doctor immediately. Have the label of the chemical with you when you call and

give all possible information to your physician or poison control operator. Most regions have toll-free numbers for their Poison Control Centers. Be sure to find out the number of your Poison Control Center and have it posted near your telephone.

Immediately flush skin and eyes with water for at least 20 minutes should any chemicals splash on them.

After exposure to harmful substances, be aware of nausea, skin rashes or other flu-like symptoms. Report any such reactions to your doctor.

Always look for a safer alternative.

Garden chemicals are often unpleasant to use and can kill more than insects. There are also a number of organic gardening methods to help control weeds and pests. These ways are not only healthier for you, but better for the environment. Talk to your local gardening centers for more information on ways to control pests without the use of chemicals.

Safety with garden chemicals starts before they even reach your garden. Knowledge is the key. Be sure what you are buying suits your needs. Some compounds are toxic to certain plant species, and extra caution must be used when selecting chemicals for fruit and vegetable plants. In such cases be sure the compound is registered for use on plants consumed for food.

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